THE

EVIDENCE;

OR,

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RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE THE BASIS OF HUMAN FELICITY.

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No. IX.

TO YOUNG PEOPLE, &c.

Introduction to the Evidences of the divine authenticity of the Scriptures.

TAKING up the subject from the place in which it was left in the last number, we come to that part of the argument, which to the real christian, it is conceived, will be peculiarly animating and conclusive, though perhaps to others it may be deemed of little force. It is this; the experience of God's true worshippers, their rejoicing and fortitude, their elevation and composure in a near view of the most awful and solemn scenes. It is not strange, that the unsanctified world should overlook the divine excellency of the gospel. Being alienated from God, they are stupidly averse to the manifestations he makes of himself, whether in his works or word. With unholy tempers, the system which reveals a redeemer can never be beheld only as a sealed book. To such its transcendant charms are hidden. But to the believer, it is a source of inexpressible satisfaction. The heart on which God has impressed his image is nourished by the sincere milk of the word. In this blessed volume, is discovered no deficiency, no redundancy. A divine suitableness reigns through the whole. It carries the soul in its ardent desires up to God, and discloses the unutterable glory of the invisible state of the blessed. Though the believer in Christ cannot bring others into his views, yet he himself can never be made to stagger at the promises of God. He knows by a faith stronger than death that his redeemer lives, and can with a cheerfulness, and a fortitude above fear commit himself to his keeping as unto a faithful creator.

LOOK for a moment on the examples of the apostles and prophets, and vast numbers of the ancient saints. These are before us, and from them what are we to learn? What truths do they crowd upon our minds? Do we not discover in these examples the most earnest longing after God? What elevation of views towards Christ's kingdom and reign? With earthly prospects before them the most dismal, they are undismayed. They are aloof from danger with weapons aimed at their life. Heroes have been eulogized by bards who have painted fortitude in the most vivid colors, but it sinks even to cowardice compared with that of saint Paul. He was ready to be offered. Their's was the fortitude of ambition whose sole object was gratification. His was the fortitude of a christian, enlivened and animated by the pres-

ence and smiles of the infinite majesty. Was it fancy, was it a gilded throne, was it an earthly paradise, or was it s sudden emotion of passion which elevated the minds of expiring martyrs? No, it was the love of Christ, and their entire confidence in his word. Every Christian has a measure of the same holy fortitude. How many have left the world in the rapture of triumph? Have any of you, my young readers, experienced the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, you have beheld a divinity in his word, which has tuned your soul to praise. If now in the exercise of grace, the pulse of holy affection beats in unison with the spirit of the gospel. Indeed, those who have never been experimentally taught, in seasons of deep calamity, have a conviction of truth, which they cannot suppress. Especially when the arrows of the Almighty are made sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies, conscience witnesses for God that his word is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword. How frequently are the wicked brought to keen sensibility! Though their sins be ever so latent, the word of God will find them out. They are led up trembling to the bar of truth. And blessed be God, multitudes have let go their weapons of rebellion and found peace at the foot of the cross. Truth is irresistible, witnessed by thoussands. And on the day of final account God's word will be confessed without a dissenting voice in the whole assembled universe. Thus have been suggested in the course of numbers some of the outlines of the evidences which confirm the divine authenticity of the scriptures. In the next number will be noticed the most plausible objections to what has preceded.

E.

"*I will seek it yet again,*"

Says the slanderer. Slander is the worst kind of robbery. For as character is dearer than property, the invasion is the greater evil and and the felony of deeper die. Shakespeare justly observes, "He who steals my purse, steals trash, 'tis his, t'was mine and has been slave to thousands; but he who filches from me my good name, robs me of that which makes not him the richer, but makes me poor indeed." Law provides against slander, as well as theft, but since in no case it can give reparation for the injury sustained, it is resorted to but rarely by the sufferer, and of course slander becomes a tolerated evil. Slander has its grades, but in its lowest stage it is always malignant—it carries poison. This vice has few acknowledged pretexts. Slander is fed by conscious infamy and a secret hope of rising on the ruins of the innocent. We may be guilty of this crime, through mistaken motives or unguardedness. If my neighbor has committed a fault shall I publish it to create a topic of conversation, and myself the hero of that topic? Had I not better be silent, and seek an opportunity to do my neighbor good by friendly admonition? If, therefore, I reherse his faults, I am ungenerous. If I gloss them, I am a slanderer, to the amount of my exaggeration. As it is with other vices, so it is with this. It strengthens by habit. To be a slave to it, is to be wedded to an uncomfortable companion. The slanderer is always falling, when he thinks he is rising. It is a vice of easy detection. But lamentable, destructive, and infamous as this vice is, the slanderer will go on cannibal-like, and nothing will stop him, but the grace of God. "He will seek it yet again," at great expense. He sacrifices conscience, makes the

innocent the victims of his guilt, builds the scaffold for his own execution, and seals the sentence, "depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Says the swearer, "I will seek it yet again." By swearing profanely nothing is gained. Men want reputation. But swearing will not gain it. Though a man may have fair traits of character, yet if he is profane, he shades them. All vices are fed from the same corrupt fountain, and though they are not alike disgraceful, yet we cannot help feeling that they are allied. If we hear a man, belch out profane oaths, we are instantly suspicious, that his character in other respects, is deficient. His general reputation sinks, in our estimation, in degree. If reputation, therefore, is the object sought, profanity is in the scale against him. But is money what he most craves? Swearing will not help him to the acquisition. If his pockets are empty, swearing profanely will not fil them. After he has accumulated oaths he is as poor as ever. If a man wants to make us believe him, will swearing sanction his declarations? Does he swear, thinking, to shew himself great and courageous? Cowards and blockheads, can do the business as well, if not quite with the same grace. The profane, though they have much conviction on the subject, will not give it up. Though the youth be corrupted and spoiled by their examples, and though they give ever so much pain to their virtuous friends, "they will seek it yet again." The threatenings of the Almighty, who has assured them, they must account to him for every idle word, and has graciously pointed out the evils to fall on those who take his name in vain, yet, they will not desist. Old age, with grey hairs, tottering steps, and trembling nerves will not shut the mouth of blasphemy. While he has breath, he will profane the name of God.

In view of what has been said in conformity to this short portion of scripture, every parent and guardian of youth must be sensible he holds a place of high responsibility. To you is committed the care of those whose eye is on your example, and on whom their usefulness and happiness depend. It is with the more pleasure the application is made to you, in this behalf, because I know that such is your attachment to your children, that without violence done to your feelings you can omit no task, which you believe conducive to their happiness. If you are awake to reality, you must be sensible, that vices of ruinous and destructive tendency, are daily acted over, in the sight and hearing of your children, by those older than they. Your experience tells you, that the youthful mind is prone to imitate vicious example. It would be in vain to say more to bring you to a decision on this point, than to solicit you by the authority of God, and the present and eternal well being of your children, to forego every interest of a worldly nature rather than omit cautioning and guarding your children against the sinful practices, which flatter them with the most delusive charms. It is not enough that you be silent in the place you are situated. You will not refrain your lips from speaking kindly, seriously, and with all that authority, which under God you are bound to exercise over them. Your children are not beset by a barbarous and blood thirsty foe, but they are beset, by a host of vices more dangerous and in the end more fatal. If you should fail acting with promptitude and in season you may expect to experience the ser-

row of having undutiful and undone children. Remember the resolution of Joshua and do likewise. If any youth finds himself leaning to any of the vices which has been named, consider that your feet are well nigh sliding, and escape as from the pit of destruction. With you after all, it is left under God, whether you will be useful to society, respectable and happy, or whether you will dishonor your parents, and become wretched. God whose eye is over all, has a claim on you and to him you are to give account. Rather than yield to vice, let your right hand forget his cunning. Watch each avenue of the soul, and guard against each besetting sin with irresistible fortitude. E.

State of Christianity in the fourth century.

The fourth century has been rendered eminently illustrious, in the annals of the Christian church, by an accession of power, which, whilst it released its suffering members from the cruel yoke of persecution, has justly been esteemed, by considerate and unprejudiced men, as an eventful period, materially detrimental to the divine simplicity of Truth.

The conversion of the Emperor Constantine produced a combination the most heterogeneous. In his own person he united the *civil* and *ecclesiastical supremacy;* deprived the subjects of the Prince of Peace of their unquestionable birthright, as the *Lord's freemen;* and made the kingdom of Christ completely a kingdom of this world.

Constantine endeavored to substantiate his unhallowed temerity with the sanction of God's everlasting name. At an entertainment which he gave the bishops, he told them, "You are bishops in those matters transacted *within* the church, but in those done *without* the church, I am a bishop *constituted by God.*" The Emperor never suffered his assumed prerogative to be abridged; but when it suited either his temper, or interest, governed with a high hand, both *within* and *without* the church. In his zeal for improving the designs of infinite wisdom, and strengthening the works of Omnipotence, he considerably defaced the prestine beauty of the sacred edifice; and under a pretext of defending it, he betrayed it into the hands of the enemy.

In the progress of his design, he organized the church according to the principles of his civil government; constituted an endless list of offices under the titles of *Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Archbishops, Evarchs,* and country bishops; completely deprived the people of that power confided to them by Christ their great Lawgiver, and seated himself in the chair of infalibility.

The *Arian controversy* now engaged the attention of the whole Christian world. The distinguished sentiments of this faction were not of moderate growth, but radically subsisted under the names of Theodotians, Ebronites, Cerinthians, Artemonians, and Samosatenians, and attained to maturity of vigor under Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, who, when hearing the bishop of that see discourse upon the doctrine of the Trinity, took occasion to infer from what the bishop had asserted, that if the son were begotten by the father, he must necessarily have had a beginning; and consequently there must have been a time when he was not, and therefore could not be eternal: But he

admitted that he *was the first and noblest being whom the father created out of nothing*; yet *essentially* distinct from the father. This doctrine, supported by the subtile abilities of *Arius*, induced many to adopt it through Egypt, Lybia, and the upper Thebais. *Eusebius*, bishop of Nicomedia, in Bythinia, distinguished himself as a warm advocate for this opinion. Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, expelled *Arius*, and the abettors of his sentiments, from the communion of the church, and degraded them from the offices which they held. At first, the Emperor endeavored to reconcile the contending parties, and considered the opinion of Arius as of little importance; but when he apprehended that the emotions, occasioned by the controversy, portended something alarming to the state, in the exercise of his sovereign authority over the church, he called, in the year 325, the famous Council of Nice; to which were summoned deputies from the universal church; the number of which it was composed cannot precisely be ascertained; But it must have been very considerable, as it appears that there were present about 281 bishops. Here the opinions of Arius underwent a full discussion and were condemned; and Christ declared to be *consubstantial*, or of the *same essence*, with the Father. The presbyter of Alexandria was excommunicated by the synod, and banished to Illyrium; but was by the Emperor recalled from his banishment, probably about three years afterwards, when he submitted to the determination of the Nicene synod, in regard to the person of Christ; and before Constantine solemnly swore to the sincerity of his profession. The emperor ordered the bishop of Constantinople to receive him to the communion of the church, at which Alexander was exceedingly troubled, from an apprehension of the insincerity of Arius. The good man spent several days in prayer and supplication to God; and earnestly entreated him, in his providence, to interfere and that if the opinion of Arius was not true, he would signify it by an exhibition of some public judgment. The day came when Arius was to be re-admitted to the communion of the church, upon which occasion he was publicly attended through the streets by the friends of his faction; but, having occasion to turn aside to a convenient place, to perform one of the functions of nature, it is certain, that he there expired in a most tragical manner; a vast effusion of blood, and part of his intestines accompanied the dicharge of his excrements. Whether this awful event may be attributed to the unjustifiable zeal of his enemies, or to the immediate hand of Heaven for his impious insincerity in subscribing the Nicene creed, must be left to the decision of a future day.

The Arian faction soon divided into two principal branches:

1. *The Pure Arians*, who held "that the Son was not produced out of the substance of the Father, but created out of nothing."

The Semi-Arians, who maintained "that the Son was of a like substance with the Father, or similar to him in his essence, not by nature, but by a special privilege."

All the other various opinions of this sect may be considered only as subordinate to this general division, a detail of which would far exceed the limits of this work.

It may be necessary to observe, that the opinion of Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople, the head

of the sect of the Pneumatomacians*, occasioned the second general council to be held at Constantinople, in the year 381. Macedonius had boldly denied the personality of the Holy Ghost, whom he considered "as *a divine energy*, diffused thro' the universe." At this council, what had been left ambiguous or indeterminate at the council of Nice, was explicitly defined; and the doctrine *of three persons in one God* established, as received by the generality of Christian churches to the present day.

CHRISTIANITY was now the prevailing religion; fostered under the imperial favor, multitudes every where assumed the sacred name; but the *precious was mixed with the vile*: and many dangereus tumults arose in the church, by the restless disposition of too many of its unsatisfied members.

IN support of the sacred cause of truth, several eminent characters particularly distinguished themselves. The chief of whom were

EUSEBIUS PAMPHILUS, bishop of Cæsarea the ecclesiastical writer.

ATHANASIUS, the patriarch of Alexandria, of whom it was said, *Unus Athanasius contra totum orbem.*†

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM‡, so surnamed upon account of the richness of his eloquence. He was patriarch of Constantiople.

JEROME, noted for his latin copy of the Scriptures, corrected from the original vulgate.

THE famous Augustin, bishop of Hippo, the splendor of whose name filled all the world.

To whom may be added, Basil, Cyril Epiphanius, the two Gregories, Hilary, Lactantius, and many others.

Z.

OBITUARY.

Death of William Gray.

DEAR SIR,

PLEASE to accept a short account of what I remember of the death of a child at Buckingham, who died July 14, 1795; of a truth "out of the mouths of babes and sucklins the Lord hath perfected praise." This I have lately seen fulfilled in William Gray, and I commit it to paper as one of the gracious tokens of divine favour in early life, which should be an encouragement to those who have children, to pay the tenderest attention to their morals, and endeavor to impress such serious truths upon their minds as are able to make them, as they did Timothy, from a child, wise unto salvation. Then might parents have joy in their death. Little Gray was a very sensible child, and only 11 years old when he died. He never enjoyed a good state of health; was a lover of his book, especially the bible, and, had he lived, was to have had a new one for learning the 5th chapter of St. John, but he said he had rather die, and go to heaven; for then he should want no bible. My first interview with him was on the Lord's day. Hearing that he could not live the day, I went, and

* *Opposers of the Holy Ghost.*

† *One Athanasius against the whole world.*

‡ *Chrysostom means* golded mouthed.

found him in a happy state of mind, perfectly sensible. I asked him, if our dear Saviour was good to him in his affliction? He said, "Yes; he prayed to his dear Jesus to give him patience, and then he would wait his time." I was agreeably surprised to hear such language from a child; I asked him, whether any friend had told him of Jesus Christ? He replied, "No, It came into my mind." I asked him, if he knew how a poor sinner was accepted of God? He said, "Yes" "*How my dear?* He replied, "That Jesus died upon the cross for sinners" I asked him, if he knew that he was a poor sinner? He replied, "Yes, but not so bad as some;" but added, "We have all sinned." A mother in Israel asked him, if he loved sin? With tears he replied, "No." I asked him, if he did not love that dear Jesus who had redeemed him from misery? He replied, "Yes; and I long to be with him." "What, should you not wish to get well again?" He replied, "No, I do not wish to live in this poor perishing, undone world." I asked him, if ever he found the enemy of souls tempting him? He said, "Yes; but I pray to my dear Jesus to overcome him for me." Then I hope you find him precious to you." He said, "Yes." When I mentioned some promises to him, his eye brightened, and there came a fresh hue upon his dying cheek, while he expressed his hope that his dear Jesus would forgive him, and receive him. Mentioning to him the invitation recorded in Matthew, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," he repeated that promise after me, "I will give you rest;" adding, "O how sweet and precious these words are to me!" His mother informed me, that the evening before I came to see him, he desired his brothers and sisters to come to see him, and exhorted them to be good, and said, "Remember me when I am dead, and gone to my dear Jesus." I was going to leave him, but he called me, and hoped I would pray with him before I went. I went to see him several times after; but he was so weak that it hurt him to speak. I encouraged him to bear the moment of suffering, and wait the Lord's time: he could only say, "Yes." Thus he fell asleep in the bosom of his dear Jesus, who said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

FINIS.

Short Sentences.

A CONSTANT seeking after heavenly wisdom, is no bad evidence of having already attained it.

To believe we have immortal souls, while we shew no concern about their eternal welfare, is to display our folly in the highest degree.

WHEN a believer's trials come by the hand of a man, a hard struggle may likely ensue, before he attain to a forgiving spirit.

To manifest a real concern for the good of a person's soul and body, in return for an injury received, is a clear evidence of a Christian spirit.

ANECDOTES.

Happy Deliverance of a young man, who had long been under divine convictions.

"AT last" says he, "when I had lost all hope these words were dear-

ly impressed on my mind; believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved. I cried out in an agony, What is believing? What is real scriptural faith? Lord teach me! I know nothing! I can do nothing! If thou save me not, I perish! It was then brought to my mind—Cast all thy care upon him. I cried, Lord, the burden of my sin is all my care, and may I cast this upon thee? Wilt thou receive such a sinner? I know that thou art *able* to save me, and thy blood is sufficient to atone. But art thou indeed *willing?* It came into my heart—only believe. I felt a rising hope, and cried, I will: But my sins stared me in the face, and I thought, O it is impossible! My sins have been so secret, so complicated. It came to me again, only believe. I thought, it cannot be *now*. I must repent more, be more in earnest. It is impossible he should be so merciful, as to forgive all my sins *now*. It was applied a third time.—Only believe. I said, Lord, help me to believe, and to cast my soul upon thy free mercy! Let me know, that I am indeed born of Thee; that I do believe to the saving of my soul. I have nothing to plead, but Jesus came to save sinners, even the lost. I am lost! Thou hast said, Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. *I* am weary and heavy laden; *I come;* therefore the promise is for *me*. While I was thus pleading, I was enabled to venture my soul upon the Redeemer, with an assured confidence in his promises. Then, I was happy indeed: His love was shed abroad in my heart; and those precious words were applied,—He that loveth, is born of God. Now, if I had a thousand souls, I could have trusted him with them all. I found a real change in my heart: I was a new creature,—I was a child of God.

AN aged minister having asked a young preacher, if ever he sought the blessing of God on his learning, he having answered, that he had not, he told him, with an austere look, that "unsanctified learning had done much mischief to the church of God." His words leaving a deep impression on him, he afterwards, when in any strait, prayed for the Lord's help and blessing.

HONESTY.

ONE day, when a vacant see was to be filled, the synod observed to the Emperor, Peter the Great, that they had none but ignorant men to present to his Majesty. "Well, then," replied the Czar, "you have only to pitch upon the most honest man; he will be worth two learned ones."

Voltaire's History of Russia.

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